

The Role of Social Support and Emotion Regulation in Fostering Curiosity Among Individuals with Specific Learning Disorders

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Article Info

Article type:

Original Research

How to cite this article:

Abdolmalaki, S. (2023). The Role of Social Support and Emotion Regulation in Fostering Curiosity Among Individuals with Specific Learning Disorders. *Psychological Research in Individuals with Exceptional Needs*, 1(2), 35-42.

<https://doi.org/10.61838/kman.prien.1.2.6>



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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to investigate the relationships between curiosity, social support, and emotion regulation in individuals with specific learning disorders (SLD). The objective was to determine how social support and emotion regulation predict levels of curiosity in this population, providing insights for effective interventions. The study employed a cross-sectional design with a sample size of 252 participants, selected based on the Morgan and Krejcie table. Data were collected using the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II (CEI-II) for curiosity, the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) for social support, and the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) for emotion regulation. Pearson correlation and linear regression analyses were conducted using SPSS-27 to examine the relationships between the variables. Descriptive statistics indicated moderate levels of curiosity, social support, and emotion regulation among participants. Pearson correlation analysis revealed significant positive correlations between curiosity and both social support ($r = 0.52, p < 0.001$) and emotion regulation ($r = 0.46, p < 0.001$). Regression analysis showed that social support and emotion regulation collectively accounted for 37% of the variance in curiosity ($R^2 = 0.37, F(2, 249) = 72.19, p < 0.001$). Both social support ($B = 0.32, p < 0.001$) and emotion regulation ($B = 0.25, p < 0.001$) emerged as significant predictors of curiosity. The findings highlight the significant roles of social support and emotion regulation in fostering curiosity among individuals with SLD. Supportive social environments and effective emotion regulation strategies are critical for promoting curiosity and engagement. These insights can inform the development of targeted interventions aimed at enhancing the well-being and academic success of individuals with SLD.

Keywords: Curiosity, Social Support, Emotion Regulation, Specific Learning Disorders, Pearson Correlation, Linear Regression, Psychological Well-being.

1. Introduction

Curiosity, an intrinsic motivational state that drives individuals to seek out novel information and experiences, plays a critical role in cognitive and emotional development. Curiosity has been extensively studied as a fundamental aspect of human behavior that promotes learning, exploration, and personal growth. Social support is a critical determinant of psychological well-being and developmental outcomes. It encompasses the emotional, informational, and practical assistance received from social networks, which can significantly influence an individual's motivation and behavior (Salmon & Barrera, 2021; Schultheis, 2019). Research has shown that social support can enhance life satisfaction, resilience, and emotion regulation, which are closely related to curiosity (Azpiazu et al., 2021). Adolescents who perceive higher levels of social support tend to exhibit greater life satisfaction and resilience, which may, in turn, promote a more curious and exploratory approach to learning (Behroozi et al., 2018; Fariba et al., 2022; Heiman & Olenik-Shemesh, 2022).

In the context of Specific Learning Disorders (SLD), social support can mitigate the stress and frustration associated with learning difficulties, thereby fostering a more conducive environment for curiosity to flourish. Support from family, friends, and educators can provide the encouragement and resources needed for these individuals to engage in exploratory behaviors and pursue their interests (Enayati Shabkolai et al., 2023; Karimi Dastaki & Mahmudi, 2024; Schertz et al., 2013).

Emotion regulation, the ability to manage and respond to emotional experiences in a flexible and adaptive manner, is another crucial factor influencing curiosity. Effective emotion regulation strategies can help individuals cope with negative emotions and maintain a positive outlook, which is conducive to curiosity (Joormann & Gotlib, 2010). Conversely, difficulties in emotion regulation can lead to heightened anxiety, depression, and stress, which can inhibit exploratory behavior and diminish curiosity (Southward et al., 2020).

The relationship between social support and emotion regulation is complex and multifaceted. Social support can enhance emotion regulation by providing emotional and practical resources that help individuals cope with stress and negative emotions (Azpiazu et al., 2021). In turn, effective emotion regulation can enhance the perception and utilization of social support, creating a positive feedback

loop that promotes overall well-being and curiosity (Balverdi & Babakhani, 2020; Iri et al., 2019).

In educational settings, this dynamic is particularly relevant. Teacher support, for example, can significantly influence students' motivation and emotion regulation, which are crucial for sustaining curiosity and engagement in learning activities (Huang, 2023). By fostering a supportive and emotionally safe environment, educators can help students with SLD develop the curiosity and resilience needed to overcome their challenges.

Individuals with SLD often face unique emotional challenges that can impact their curiosity and overall development (Aghaziarati et al., 2023; Bulut et al., 2024). These challenges can include increased anxiety, social anxiety, and difficulties in recognizing and interpreting emotional cues (Lievore, 2024). These emotional difficulties can create barriers to curiosity by making new and uncertain situations seem more daunting and less appealing.

Interventions that address these emotional challenges, such as dialectical behavior therapy (DBT) skills training, have been shown to improve emotion regulation and reduce symptoms of anxiety and depression (Southward et al., 2020). By enhancing emotion regulation skills, such interventions can create a more supportive environment for curiosity to thrive.

Building on this theoretical framework, the present study aims to investigate the relationships between curiosity, social support, and emotion regulation in individuals with SLD. Specifically, the study will examine:

- The correlation between social support and curiosity.
- The correlation between emotion regulation and curiosity.
- The combined predictive power of social support and emotion regulation on curiosity.
- The univariate predictive power of social support and emotion regulation on curiosity.

2. Methods and Materials

2.1. Study Design and Participants

This study employed a cross-sectional design to examine the relationships between curiosity, social support, and emotion regulation in individuals with specific learning disorders. The sample size was determined based on the Morgan and Krejcie table, which suggested a required sample size of 252 participants. Participants were recruited from various educational and therapeutic institutions specializing in learning disorders. Inclusion criteria included

a formal diagnosis of a specific learning disorder, age between 18 and 45 years, and the ability to provide informed consent. Participants were informed about the study's purpose and procedures, and their participation was voluntary. Confidentiality and anonymity were ensured throughout the study.

2.2. Measures

2.2.1. Curiosity

To measure the dependent variable of curiosity, the Curiosity and Exploration Inventory-II (CEI-II) will be utilized. The CEI-II, developed by Todd B. Kashdan, Rose McKnight, and Michael F. Silvia in 2004, is a widely recognized tool designed to assess two key dimensions of curiosity: Stretching (the desire to seek out new knowledge and experiences) and Embracing (the willingness to embrace the novel and uncertain). The inventory consists of 10 items, scored on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The total score is derived by summing the items, with higher scores indicating greater curiosity. The CEI-II has demonstrated strong validity and reliability in numerous studies across different populations, making it a robust measure for assessing curiosity (Ebrahimi & Esmaili, 2023; Gruber & Ranganath, 2019; Hunaepi et al., 2021; Jabarooti & Bagherimajd, 2023; Wade & Kidd, 2019; Zamanpour et al., 2023; Zhang et al., 2023).

2.2.2. Social Support

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) will be employed to measure the independent variable of social support. Created by Gregory D. Zimet and his colleagues in 1988, the MSPSS evaluates perceived social support from three sources: Family, Friends, and Significant Others. The scale comprises 12 items, each rated on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (very strongly disagree) to 7 (very strongly agree). Scores are calculated for each subscale by averaging the items, and a higher score reflects greater perceived social support. The MSPSS has been extensively validated and shown to possess excellent reliability and validity in diverse samples, making it a trusted instrument for measuring social support (Buursma et al., 2020; Ghazvineh et al., 2022; Yıldırım & Akman, 2023; Yuan et al., 2023).

2.2.3. Emotion Regulation

To assess the independent variable of emotion regulation, the Difficulties in Emotion Regulation Scale (DERS) will be used. Developed by Kim L. Gratz and Lizabeth Roemer in 2004, the DERS is designed to evaluate individuals' typical levels of emotion dysregulation. It includes six subscales: Nonacceptance of Emotional Responses, Difficulties Engaging in Goal-Directed Behavior, Impulse Control Difficulties, Lack of Emotional Awareness, Limited Access to Emotion Regulation Strategies, and Lack of Emotional Clarity. The DERS consists of 36 items, rated on a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (almost never) to 5 (almost always). Scores are calculated for each subscale as well as an overall total score, with higher scores indicating greater difficulties in emotion regulation. The DERS has been validated and proven reliable in various studies, ensuring its suitability for assessing emotion regulation in individuals with specific learning disorders (Basharpoor & Ahmadi, 2020; Dragan, 2015; Heshmati et al., 2018; Willem et al., 2019).

2.3. Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS version 27. To assess the relationships between the dependent variable (curiosity) and the independent variables (social support and emotion regulation), Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated. This analysis provided insight into the strength and direction of the relationships between curiosity and each independent variable.

Additionally, linear regression analysis was performed to further understand the predictive power of social support and emotion regulation on curiosity. In this analysis, curiosity served as the dependent variable, while social support and emotion regulation were the independent variables. The linear regression model allowed for the evaluation of the extent to which social support and emotion regulation predicted curiosity, while controlling for the influence of each independent variable.

The significance level for all statistical tests was set at $p < 0.05$. Assumptions of linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and multicollinearity were checked to ensure the appropriateness of the regression analysis. Descriptive statistics were also computed to provide an overview of the sample characteristics and the distribution of scores for the key variables.

3. Findings and Results

The study included a total of 252 participants diagnosed with specific learning disorders. Among the participants, 134 were male (53.17%) and 118 were female (46.83%). The age distribution was as follows: 36 participants (14.29%) were aged 18-24 years, 78 participants (30.95%) were aged 25-31 years, 96 participants (38.10%) were aged 32-38 years, and 42 participants (16.67%) were aged 39-45 years.

In terms of educational background, 72 participants (28.57%) had completed high school, 126 participants (50.00%) had some college education, and 54 participants (21.43%) had obtained a college degree. Additionally, the majority of participants, 198 (78.57%), reported receiving regular support from family members, while 54 (21.43%) reported receiving minimal or no family support.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics for curiosity, social support, and emotion regulation

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation
Curiosity	32.48	5.79
Social Support	50.32	8.21
Emotion Regulation	85.67	12.53

According to Table 1 participants reported an average curiosity score of 32.48 (SD = 5.79). The mean score for social support was 50.32 (SD = 8.21), while the average score for emotion regulation was 85.67 (SD = 12.53).

Before conducting the linear regression analysis, key assumptions were checked to ensure the validity of the results. The assumption of linearity was confirmed through scatterplot inspection, which showed a linear relationship between the dependent variable (curiosity) and the independent variables (social support and emotion regulation). The normality of residuals was verified using

the Shapiro-Wilk test, which yielded a p-value of 0.082, indicating that the residuals followed a normal distribution. Homoscedasticity was assessed by examining the plot of standardized residuals versus standardized predicted values, which displayed no discernible pattern, confirming equal variances. Multicollinearity was checked using the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF), with all VIF values below 1.5, indicating no significant multicollinearity among the predictors. Overall, the assumptions were satisfactorily met, supporting the appropriateness of the regression analysis.

Table 2

Pearson correlation coefficients and p-values between curiosity and independent variables (social support and emotion regulation)

Variable	Curiosity	p-value
Social Support	0.52	<0.001
Emotion Regulation	0.46	<0.001

The Pearson correlation analysis in Table 2 revealed a significant positive correlation between curiosity and social support ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$), and a significant positive

correlation between curiosity and emotion regulation ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$).

Table 3

Summary of regression analysis for curiosity with social support and emotion regulation

Source	Sum of Squares	Degrees of Freedom	Mean Squares	R	R ²	R ² adj	F	p
Regression	1584.73	2	792.37	0.61	0.37	0.36	72.19	<0.001
Residual	2724.19	249	10.94					
Total	4308.92	251						

The regression analysis in Table 3 yielded a significant model with $R = 0.61$, $R^2 = 0.37$, and adjusted $R^2 = 0.36$, $F(2, 249) = 72.19$, $p < 0.001$. This indicates that 37% of the

variance in curiosity can be explained by social support and emotion regulation.

Table 4

Multivariate regression analysis results for curiosity with social support and emotion regulation

Variable	B	Standard Error	β	t	p
Constant	12.47	2.38		5.24	<0.001
Social Support	0.32	0.05	0.40	6.50	<0.001
Emotion Regulation	0.25	0.04	0.35	5.58	<0.001

The multivariate regression analysis in Table 4 indicated that social support ($B = 0.32$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = 0.40$, $t = 6.50$, $p < 0.001$) and emotion regulation ($B = 0.25$, $SE = 0.04$, $\beta = 0.35$, $t = 5.58$, $p < 0.001$) were both significant predictors of curiosity. The constant term was also significant ($B = 12.47$, $SE = 2.38$, $t = 5.24$, $p < 0.001$).

4. Discussion and Conclusion

The present study aimed to investigate the relationships between curiosity, social support, and emotion regulation in individuals with specific learning disorders (SLD). The results revealed significant positive correlations between curiosity and both social support ($r = 0.52$, $p < 0.001$) and emotion regulation ($r = 0.46$, $p < 0.001$). Furthermore, the regression analysis demonstrated that social support and emotion regulation collectively accounted for 37% of the variance in curiosity ($R^2 = 0.37$), with both variables emerging as significant predictors. These findings underscore the critical roles that social support and emotion regulation play in fostering curiosity among individuals with SLD.

The significant positive correlation between social support and curiosity aligns with previous research highlighting the importance of social connections in enhancing psychological well-being and motivational states. Azpiazu, Fernández, and Palacios (2021) found that social support significantly contributes to life satisfaction and resilience in adolescents, which can, in turn, promote a curious and exploratory mindset (Azpiazu et al., 2021). This study extends these findings to individuals with SLD, suggesting that supportive social environments may buffer the negative impacts of learning difficulties and encourage engagement in exploratory behaviors.

Similarly, the positive relationship between emotion regulation and curiosity corroborates earlier studies indicating that effective emotion regulation is crucial for maintaining psychological resilience and a positive outlook (Joormann & Gotlib, 2010). Southward, Eberle, and Neacsiu (2020) emphasized that improved emotion regulation skills

can reduce anxiety, depression, and stress, thereby facilitating a more stable and curious disposition (Southward et al., 2020). For individuals with SLD, who often face heightened emotional challenges, the ability to manage emotions effectively can create a conducive environment for curiosity to flourish.

The combined predictive power of social support and emotion regulation on curiosity is particularly noteworthy. It suggests that these factors do not operate in isolation but interact synergistically to influence curiosity. Huang (2023) highlighted the role of teacher support in moderating the relationship between blended learning and motivation regulation, indicating that a supportive educational environment can enhance students' ability to regulate their motivation and engage more deeply in learning activities (Huang, 2023). This study's findings resonate with this perspective, suggesting that both external support systems and internal emotional management are critical for fostering curiosity in individuals with SLD.

The regression analysis results, indicating that social support ($B = 0.32$, $p < 0.001$) and emotion regulation ($B = 0.25$, $p < 0.001$) are significant predictors of curiosity, highlight the practical implications of these findings. Educators, therapists, and caregivers can leverage these insights to design interventions that enhance social support and emotion regulation skills, thereby promoting curiosity and exploratory behaviors in individuals with SLD. Lievore (2024) emphasized the role of social anxiety and executive functions in recognizing others' emotions in individuals with autism and SLD, suggesting that targeted interventions can improve emotional recognition and regulation, further supporting curiosity and engagement (Lievore, 2024).

Despite the robust findings, this study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional design limits the ability to infer causality between the variables. Longitudinal studies are needed to establish causal relationships and understand how changes in social support and emotion regulation over time impact curiosity. Second, the study relied on self-reported measures, which can be subject to response biases such as social desirability

and recall bias. Future research could benefit from incorporating objective measures and third-party assessments to validate self-reported data. Additionally, the sample was limited to individuals with SLD from specific educational and therapeutic institutions, which may not be representative of the broader population with SLD. This limits the generalizability of the findings, and future studies should aim to include more diverse samples to enhance external validity.

Building on the findings of this study, future research should explore several avenues to deepen the understanding of the relationships between curiosity, social support, and emotion regulation in individuals with SLD. Longitudinal studies would be particularly valuable in examining how these relationships evolve over time and the long-term impact of interventions aimed at enhancing social support and emotion regulation. Moreover, research could investigate the specific types of social support (e.g., emotional, instrumental, informational) that are most effective in fostering curiosity and how these differ across various contexts and age groups. Examining the role of technology and digital platforms in providing social support and promoting emotion regulation could also be a fruitful area of investigation, given the increasing reliance on digital tools in education and therapy. Finally, experimental studies testing the efficacy of targeted interventions designed to enhance social support and emotion regulation could provide valuable insights into practical strategies for promoting curiosity in individuals with SLD.

The findings of this study have several practical implications for educators, therapists, and caregivers working with individuals with SLD. First, creating supportive social environments is crucial for fostering curiosity and engagement in learning. Educators should prioritize building strong, positive relationships with students and encourage peer support within the classroom. Incorporating social-emotional learning (SEL) programs that teach emotion regulation skills can also be beneficial, as these programs help students develop the ability to manage their emotions effectively, thereby enhancing their capacity for curiosity and exploration. Additionally, training for teachers and caregivers on how to provide effective social support and recognize the emotional needs of individuals with SLD can further promote a supportive learning environment. Finally, integrating technology-based interventions that offer personalized support and emotion regulation training can complement traditional approaches and provide additional resources for individuals with SLD,

helping them to navigate their learning challenges and cultivate a curious, engaged mindset.

This study highlights the significant roles of social support and emotion regulation in fostering curiosity among individuals with specific learning disorders. The findings suggest that supportive social environments and effective emotion regulation strategies are crucial for promoting curiosity and exploratory behaviors in this population. By understanding and leveraging these relationships, educators, therapists, and caregivers can develop targeted interventions that enhance the well-being and academic success of individuals with SLD. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics through longitudinal and experimental studies, further elucidating the mechanisms through which social support and emotion regulation influence curiosity and providing practical insights for fostering a curious, engaged mindset in individuals with specific learning disorders.

Authors' Contributions

Authors contributed equally to this article.

Declaration

In order to correct and improve the academic writing of our paper, we have used the language model ChatGPT.

Transparency Statement

Data are available for research purposes upon reasonable request to the corresponding author.

Acknowledgments

We would like to express our gratitude to all individuals helped us to do the project.

Declaration of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

Funding

According to the authors, this article has no financial support.

Ethics Considerations

The study protocol adhered to the principles outlined in the Helsinki Declaration, which provides guidelines for ethical research involving human participants.

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